

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ABUJA 001515

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: GON REMOVES POLICE PROTECTION FROM OFFICIALS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, NOT FOR PUBLICATION ON THE INTRANET OR INTERNET.

1. (U) The Inspector General of Police's Office announced August 21 that, on orders from the Presidency, it would greatly reduce the use of police as bodyguards. Bodyguards have been limited to the President, Vice President, Ministers and Ministers of State, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Senate President and Deputy, Speaker of the House and Deputy, Secretary to the Federal Government, Head of the Civil

SIPDIS

Service, Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, President of the Court of Appeal, Governors and their deputies, Chief Judges of States, and chairmen of local governments and their deputies. This leaves out numerous Special Advisors to the President and Vice President, the majority of the National Assembly, and most judges, in addition to numerous private individuals ranging from businessmen to political godfathers.

2. (U) Senate President Wabara expressed concerns that Nigerian politics has too many violent elements, and said the Senate would look into the issue. The opposition All Progressives Grand Alliance Party protested that, under the new rule, officials elected and sworn in after disputed elections would keep their security. Those candidates petitioning against them would have none. The party warned that "intimidation, harassment and indeed assassination of these (opposition) political leaders shall commence."

3. (SBU) COMMENT: On its surface, the move to reduce the number of police bodyguards and escorts is laudable. The police force in Nigeria is stretched thin, and continued private use by citizens to demonstrate their wealth and self-perceived status -- in line with Nigerian tradition -- also leads to allegations of corruption. Below the surface, however, Nigerian democracy, and indeed society at large, is often a violent affair. Assassination of political figures is a too-common occurrence, as the murders of Bola Ige, Barnabas Igwe, and Marshall Harry (among others) over the last two years demonstrate. Removing police protection could put many politicians, especially in the opposition, at greater risk of harassment, intimidation and assassination.
ROBERTS